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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: November 21, 2007

#### New Video Threat against Austria

¶1. All Austrian media report that a new internet video threatening Austria and Germany has surfaced, apparently made by militants associated with the "Global Islamic Media Front" (GIMF), an al Qaeda propaganda group. The video demands that Austria and Germany withdraw their military personnel from Afghanistan. It also calls for the immediate release of two suspected Islamic militants who were arrested in Austria in September, after a previous video warning. The Austrian Interior Ministry has said it is "taking the message seriously," but emphasized at the same time that it sees "no concrete threat" against Austria at this point.

#### Children's Rights Not Protected by Law

¶2. Organizations concerned with children's rights have criticized Austria for failing to fulfill its obligations to protect the rights of children. On Tuesday, which was International Children's Rights Day, the groups said organizations working with children are under-funded and have too few legal powers to prevent violence. The Children's Rights Convention was passed in 1989, recognizing that people under 18 need special protection. Austria signed the convention in 1992, but has not yet included its provisions into its constitution, according to a report by ORF TV's prime time news Zeit im Bild I on Tuesday.

#### Ambassador in Television Interview

¶3. In one of a series of PAS-facilitated farewell interviews, US Ambassador to Austria Susan McCaw outlined on Austrian television the highlights and challenges of her term of office. She underscored her efforts to reach out and explain US foreign policy to all Austrian audiences, and pointed to the special emphasis she has put on promoting and expanding student exchange programs in her effort to further strengthen US-Austrian relations. The most difficult issue during her ambassadorship, McCaw said, was the controversy over Austrian energy provider OMV's planned natural gas deal with Iran. OMV had certainly not broken any laws in concluding the deal, but the timing was most unfortunate, given the international community's ongoing efforts to reach a diplomatic solution in the conflict with Tehran over its nuclear program. Asked about the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Ambassador McCaw stressed that the United States wants to close the prison -

something President Bush also pointed out during his visit to Austria in 2006. The Ambassador explained, however, that some of the inmates "cannot simply be released," and that the US welcomes the assistance of the international community in addressing the matter. In a PAS-facilitated television interview, which was aired on ORF TV's prime time evening news Zeit im Bild II on Tuesday, outgoing US Ambassador to Austria Susan McCaw looks back at the key issues marking her term of office. Ambassador McCaw is "returning early to the United States for personal reasons. In Austria, one of her priorities was to improve the poor image of the Bush administration," says ORF TV. But although anti-American trends are something "one sees everywhere" these days, Ambassador McCaw underscored that she had "never experienced it directed against her personally." She added that it is "part of my job to talk to the Austrians, to listen and to answer their questions." Mostly, Austrians' concerns and misgivings "have to do with the Iraq war, but I wanted to listen and speak out about American foreign policy," McCaw continued. Regarding the controversy over OMV's planned gas deal with Iran, the Ambassador stressed that "we do not only discuss (this issue) with Austrian government officials, but with a wide range of people, and we've also been engaging in a constructive dialogue with OMV." The Austrian energy provider had "not broken any laws" in concluding the deal with Tehran, Ambassador McCaw conceded, but warned that OMV's actions have "undermined the spirit of what the UN and the international community are trying to accomplish in Iran." The Ambassador also emphasized that the US "very much does not want a war with Iran; a military option is the last thing we want. We want a diplomatic solution," and in order to achieve that the US needs all available tools, "including economic sanctions." Thus, companies like the OMV and the Austrian government are invited to "help the US to make sure a diplomatic solution can be reached with Iran," she said. On another controversial issue, the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Ambassador McCaw said that the Bush administration "very much wants to close Guantanamo, but for that we need international support. True, that is not an Austrian problem, but there are a number of issues not directly connected to Austria that still require global support." Does the United States expect Austria to take on 10 to 15 Guantanamo prisoners," senior journalist for ORF Eugen Freund asked? "We don't expect it, but we would be very pleased if the Austrians were to offer that," Ambassador McCaw replied.

#### Mideast Conference Scheduled for Next Tuesday

14. US officials have confirmed that President George Bush will host a conference on Middle East peace next Tuesday. Israel, the Palestinians, the United Nations and key Arab states including Saudi Arabia and Syria are among the 50 countries and organizations invited. It is unclear at this point which of the Arab states will send delegates, though. The militant group Hamas, which is in control of Gaza, has not been invited to participate in the upcoming talks. The meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, will be the first large-scale gathering in seven years aiming at the creation of an independent Palestinian state.  
McCaw